

EXHIBIT 6

Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico



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Washington, DC 20301**

May 2018

The estimated cost of this report for the Department of Defense (DoD) is approximately \$23,000 for FY 2017-FY 2018. This includes \$200 in expenses and \$22,800 in DoD labor.

Generated on January 29, 2018; RefID: 6-3395484

Reference: 6-3395484

Document Number: 03012018T098

Report to Congress

Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico

1. Introduction

This report replies to House Report 115-200, page 103, accompanying H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, requesting the Secretary of Defense to deliver a report to the House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Natural Resources addressing: (1) the scope of military test and training events conducted east of the Military Mission Line (MML) in the Gulf of Mexico (GOMEX); (2) comparable testing and training areas within the United States and its territories that can replicate the capabilities of the ranges and operating areas east of the MML in the GOMEX; (3) comparable testing and training areas outside the United States that are available for U.S. military testing and training activities and can replicate the capabilities of the ranges and operating areas east of the MML in the GOMEX; (4) the number of test events, exercises, and military operations conducted annually in the ranges and operating areas east of the MML in the GOMEX from 2006 to the time of the report; and (5) the extent to which the Services are unable to meet training and test requirements necessary to support operational plans should the moratorium on oil and gas leasing, pre-leasing, or any related activity east of the MML in the GOMEX not be extended.

The eastern Gulf of Mexico (EGOMEX) is an irreplaceable national asset used by the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop and maintain the readiness of our combat forces and is critical to achieving the objectives contained in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. The unique capabilities present in the region have been developed over decades through the investment of billions of taxpayer dollars and countless hours of effort by federal, state, and private organizations and local citizens. No other area in the world provides the U.S. military with ready access to a highly instrumented, network-connected, surrogate environment for military operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf and Indo-Pacific Theater. If oil and gas development were to extend east over the MML, without sufficient surface limiting stipulations and/or oil and gas activity restrictions mutually agreed by the DoD and Department of Interior (DoI), military flexibility in the region would be lost and test activities severely affected.

This report considered the DoD common understanding of oil and gas technologies and existing stipulations at the time of drafting. Additional information and understanding of potential oil and gas activities is being gained through DoD and DoI interdepartmental working group activities being held in support of the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale Plan. These discussion are being held to assist DoD with an updated assessment.

This report answers the five questions Congress asked the Department to address.

2. Scope of Military Operations East of the MML

Military operations east of the MML directly support the development and operations of new technologies; i.e., autonomy, directed energy and hypersonics. Technical advancements are critical to modernizing capabilities and maintaining the U.S. military advantage, a key part of the current National Defense Strategy. This area provides unique access to the installation and range capabilities needed to integrate advanced weapons systems and precision strike weapons in order to succeed in an increasingly complex security environment. The area east of the MML in the EGOMEX provides approximately 101,000 square miles of surface and airspace, making it the largest over-water DoD test and training area in the continental United States. When coupled with approximately 465,000 acres of land managed by Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, and the surrounding installations of the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Panama City, Tyndall AFB, MacDill AFB, and Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West, this area cannot be replicated as it provides one of the DoD's most diverse, highly instrumented areas. Unique features of the EGOMEX provide a surrogate environment for military operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf and Indo-Pacific Theater. EGOMEX supports the mission of the Major Range and Test Facility Base (MRTFB), which is a designated core set of the DoD test and evaluation (T&E) infrastructure and workforce needed to support the DoD acquisition system. DoD considers the MRTFB capabilities national assets, and has implemented unique policies to ensure it continues to meet DoD requirements and is available to non-DoD users as military priorities permit. Missions which utilize the EGOMEX include support for joint urgent operational need solutions (JUONs); advanced concept technology demonstrations; research, development, and engineering activity; special operations training; air-to-air and air-to-ground (surface) missile testing, including the use of drone targets; high-altitude supersonic air combat maneuver training; large force exercises; vessel evaluations, to include combat surface ship qualification trials (CSSQT) on ship classes such as the Littoral Combat Ship, the San Antonio-class amphibious transport, and the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer; air, surface, and sub-surface mine warfare testing and training; explosive ordnance disposal training; amphibious/expeditionary maneuver warfare systems development; and electronic warfare. Airspace in the EGOMEX is subdivided to facilitate airspace scheduling and deconfliction. Operations areas (OPAREAs) are also established to facilitate scheduling surface and sub-surface activities. Figure 1 depicts military scheduling areas: Navy surface/subsurface operating areas, Air Force and Navy aircraft scheduling area, and existing oil and gas surface and sub-surface development in the EGOMEX. The historical annual airspace usage is included in Attachment 1.

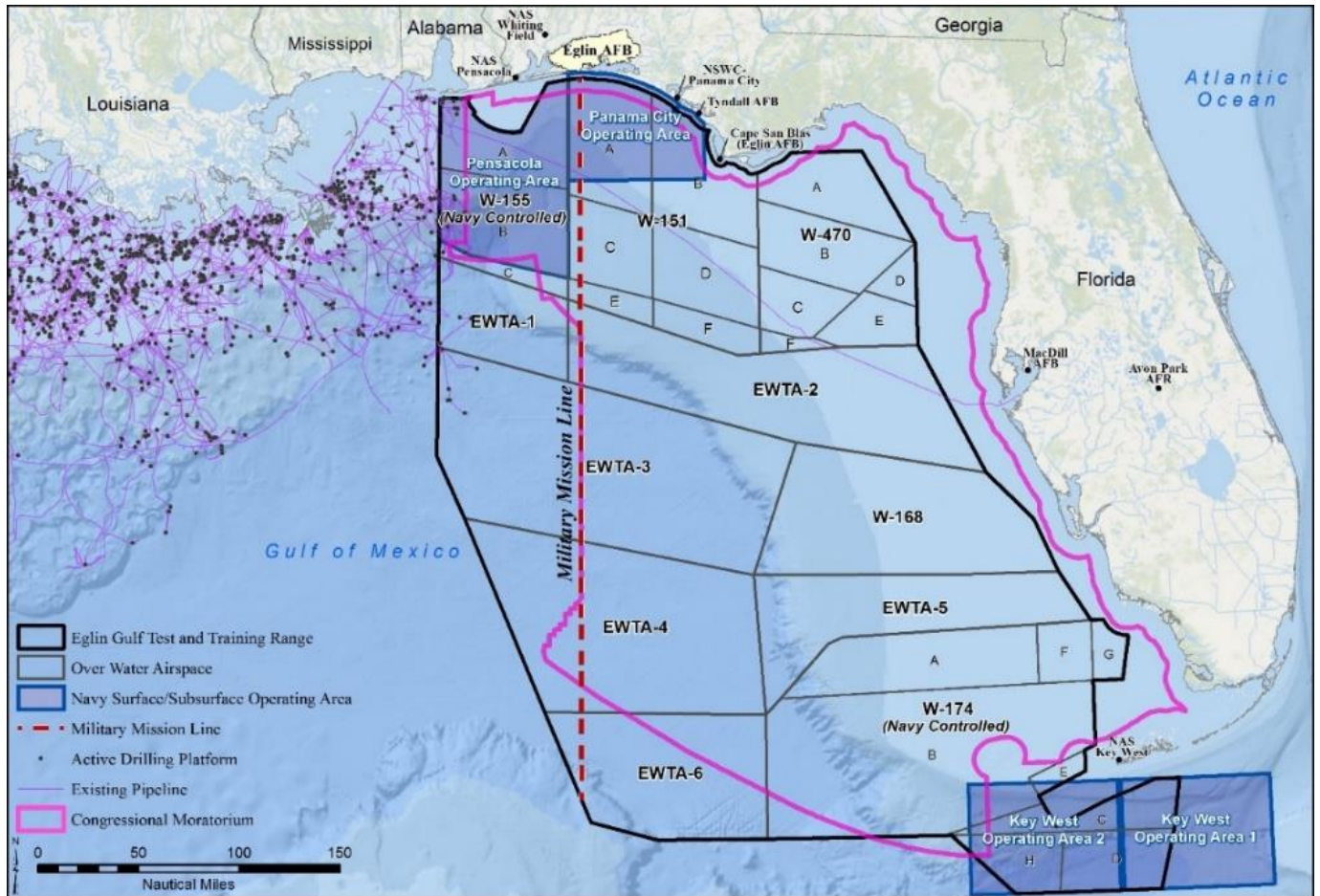


Figure 1: Military Scheduling Areas and Oil and Gas Development in the EGOMEX

2a. Support for JUONs, Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations, and Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E)

To defeat our adversaries and respond quickly to changes in the battlefield, DoD must have the resources to put the right equipment into the hands of our Service members. The ability to rapidly experiment, prototype, assess, and field new capabilities and operational concepts that create decisive advantages and eliminate those of our adversaries depends on ready access to skilled personnel, infrastructure, and ranges. Establishing the trained workforce, infrastructure, and range procedures (which includes spectrum access) needed to rapidly field innovative solutions is an evolving process that has taken years to establish. The EGOMEX has been critical to the development of advanced weapons and new tactics needed to protect forces against violent extremist organizations and succeed against our adversaries. DoD currently conducts demonstrations, assessments, and RDT&E activities of hypersonics, directed energy, long-range weapons, unmanned vehicles, and autonomy technologies to sustain our capability to defeat, deter, and disrupt our enemies.

with oil and gas activities can impact the ability to use sonar effectively. Mine acquisition using lasers and neutralization using explosives requires large-perimeter safety zones. EGOMEX possesses several characteristics that make it uniquely favorable for mine warfare testing and evaluation. The relatively calm seas in the EGOMEX allow for testing year-long and with fewer potential weather delays than other areas, and the diverse bottom types and gentle bathymetry allow for a variety of testing environments, including surrogate environments.

5h. Other Considerations

Foreign observation of critical DoD activities is a growing concern for military range operations. Foreign entities that acquire long-term access or control over assets or otherwise conduct business near military ranges conducting sensitive operations present opportunities for persistent surveillance of DoD activities. Observation can be through transient vessels or by permanent structures in a position to observe military operations. In addition, increased vessel traffic in sensitive areas increases the likelihood that foreign vessels may be undetected.

6. Conclusion

EGOMEX is an irreplaceable national asset used by DoD to develop and maintain the readiness of our combat forces, and is critical to achieving the objectives contained in the National Defense Strategy. The unique capabilities and infrastructure present in the region have been developed over decades through the investment of billions of taxpayer dollars and countless hours of effort by federal, state, and private organizations and local citizens. No other area in the world provides the U.S. military with ready access to a highly instrumented, network-connected, surrogate environment for military operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf and Indo-Pacific Theater. Simply stated, if oil and gas development were to extend east of the MML, without sufficient surface limiting stipulations and/or oil and gas activity restrictions mutually agreed by the DoD and DoI, military flexibility in the region would be lost and test and training activities would be severely affected. The result would be a less capable and less prepared military force. This outcome would be in direct conflict with National Defense Strategy goals.

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